

## Letters To the Editor

### *My War With the CIA*

To the Editor:

Re James C. Thomson's remarks on "My War With the CIA," the memoirs of Prince Norodom Sihanouk as related to Wilfred Burchett:

As I interpret his review, Thomson is saying that Sihanouk shielded Cambodia from the war by giving large chunks of that country to one of the belligerents . . . and that we (by attacking that belligerent) brought the war to Cambodia, went "far toward the destruction of Khmer civilization" . . . and so on, through the conclusion that it all represents the highest of Nixon's "crimes."

Since Thomson cannot mean that Hanoi's troops represent "Khmer civilization" . . . he can only mean that Hanoi's takeover of Khmer civilization was to be preferred to any non-Sihanouk (but genuinely Cambodian) effort to preserve

that civilization by getting rid of the North Vietnamese. So Thomson is not really concerned with Khmer preservation at all, but with North Vietnamese triumph. Which he apparently sees as inevitable — and, therefore, not to be resisted.

The undiscussed hypothesis, of course, is the question as to what would have happened had Sihanouk put Khmer cultural integrity ahead of whatever motivates him . . . and helped resist the invaders from the start. It is not absolutely out of the question that such a course might have frustrated Hanoi greatly. It might have brought a speedier and different conclusion to the Vietnam conflict—and left Khmer civilization in the hands of the residents.

The term "Southeast Asia's Poland" is unhappily more apt than Thomson means it to be. What if a unified West had come instantly to Poland's aid in 1939?

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